

Communicating during a crisis: Misinformation and disinformation

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for Animal Health
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the People of Japan

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Session Outline

- 1. Understanding Misinformation and Disinformation**
- 2. How Misinformation Spreads**
- 3. Impact of Misinformation and Disinformation**
- 4. Strategies to Counter Misinformation**
- 5. Communication Plan Interactive Activity**

Key Concepts

- **Disinformation:** False or manipulated information deliberately spread to deceive or cause harm.
- **Misinformation:** False or misleading information shared without intent to deceive.
- **Infodemic:** An overwhelming surge of information (accurate or not) during a public health crisis.
- **Mal-information:** True information used maliciously to harm individuals, groups, or nations.

Article

The next big threat to animal health emergencies: misinformation and disinformation



Example: Lumpy Skin Disease

In October 2022, viral online content spread false information about the spread and treatment of lumpy skin disease in cattle.

This misinformation led to conspiracy theories that undermined vaccination efforts and falsely suggested that milk was unsafe to drink.

Lumpy skin disease: Viral cattle disease sends rumours flying in India

21 October 2022

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Medhavi Arora

World Service Disinformation Team, India



Cows infected with lumpy skin disease in the western state of Rajasthan

Misinformation about a viral disease that infects cattle is spreading on social media in India.

Lumpy skin disease has already infected over 2.4 million animals and has led to over 110,000 deaths in India. The disease is spread by the bite of the tabanid fly.



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Is milk produced by infected cattle safe for human consumption?

Many viral social media posts falsely claim that milk has become unsafe for human consumption due to the spread of lumpy skin disease, and that drinking milk from an infected animal will lead to the development of a skin disease in humans as well. The posts are often accompanied by images of visibly diseased human bodies covered in lesions, meant to create fear.

Why People Share Misinformation

Emotional Impact

- Fear/Anxiety: Evokes strong emotions, prompting rapid sharing.
- Anger/Outrage: Drives engagement as a form of expression.

Entertainment

- Engagement: Shared for fun or attention

Political/Ideological Goals

- Sway Opinion: Influence, discredit, or mobilise.
- Disrupt Processes: Intentional disruption, e.g., elections.

Economic Gain

- Profit Motive: Spread for ad revenue or financial benefit.

How Misinformation Spreads

Fearmongering as a Catalyst:

- Fearmongering involves spreading exaggerated or false claims to evoke fear and urgency in the public
- Exploits emotional responses like fear and anxiety, encourages rapid sharing as individuals feel compelled to warn others or seek solutions.

Conspiracy Theories as a Manipulative Tool:

- Conspiracy theories propose secret, often malicious, plots behind events, offering simple explanations for complex issues.
- They thrive in environments of uncertainty or mistrust, especially during crises.

Techniques Used to Spread Misinformation

Impersonation

- Using fake identities or profiles to lend credibility to false information.

Fake Experts

- Presenting unqualified or fabricated individuals as experts to support false narratives.

Emotional Language

- Using morally charged and emotional words like "fight," "evil," "greed," or "punish" to grab attention and encourage sharing.

Misleading Visual Content

- Using emotional or out-of-context images and videos to evoke strong reactions.



Ronald Musizvingoza is 😞 feeling depressed.

Just now · 🔒



Greedy corporations are putting our lives at risk by not disclosing the true dangers of the avian flu. Protect your family and boycott poultry products! Anti-vaccine groups are right! The avian flu vaccine is just another way for big pharma to make money. Don't fall for it!

[#CorporateGreed](#) [#AvianFlu](#) [#NoVaccine](#)



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John Doe
@DrJohnDoe14



John Doe @DrJohnDoe14 · 46s




Dr. John Doe, a renowned health expert, says the avian flu is more dangerous than the government admits. This is what's happening in our farms right now. The virus is out of control, and the government is hiding the truth! [#HealthRisk](#) [#AvianFlu](#) [#CoverUp](#)





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📄 Non-Governmental & Nonprofit Organization 📍 Paris (Headquarters)
woah.org 📅 Joined September 2014

1,418 Following **315.7K** Followers

Followed by WHO Zimbabwe, Rural Young Women Support Network, and 18 others you follow

Social Media

Rapid Information Dissemination

- Enables instant, global communication.
- Acts as a key information source during crises.

User-Generated Content

- **Anyone** can create and share content.
- Quality control is limited; content is often **unverified**.

Amplification & Virality

- Algorithms prioritise sensational content, leading to virality.
- Trending topics amplify both accurate and false information.

Social Influence

- **Likes, shares, and comments** serve as credibility indicators.
- **Influencers** can sway public opinion, amplifying both truth and misinformation.

AI's Role

Amplification of Information

- AI algorithms prioritise engagement, promoting emotionally charged or polarising content.
- Content with moral-emotional language gains higher visibility and reach.

Personalization & Echo Chambers

- AI curates personalised feeds, creating filter bubbles that reinforce confirmation bias.
- Limits exposure to diverse viewpoints, fostering polarisation.

Creation & Spread of Misinformation

- AI generates deepfakes, manipulated content, and fake news.
- Bots amplify misinformation, mimicking human behaviour to influence public opinion.

Double-Edged Sword

- AI tools detect and flag false information (e.g., awareness campaigns).

Examples

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Artificial Intelligence

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David Attenborough is 'profoundly disturbed' by AI voice



Anna Kaufman

18, 2024 | Updated 1:17 p.m. ET Nov. 18, 2024

AI chatbot convinces woman to euthanize her dog. No, this isn't a Black Mirror episode

By Sanya Jain X

Aug 22, 2024 12:24 PM IST



Global News

AI chatbot convinces woman to euthanize dog (This isn't a Black Mirror episode)

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Impacts

Social and Economic

- Panic buying, market disruptions, and trade restrictions due to rumors.
- Example: False reports of a swine flu outbreak causing farmers to cull healthy livestock, leading to economic losses.

Erosion of Public Trust:

- Loss of confidence in veterinarians, health authorities, and government protocols.
- Example: Farmers refusing vaccinations for livestock due to misinformation about vaccine safety.

Compromised Crisis Response:

- Confusion and fear hinder cooperation during outbreaks.
- Example: Resistance to quarantine measures for infected herds due to distrust in official directives.

Strategies to Counter Misinformation

Proactive (Preventive):

- Pre-bunking campaigns to educate communities about misinformation tactics before they occur.
- Building relationships with trusted voices (e.g., local veterinarians or community leaders).

Reactive (Responsive):

- Debunking false claims with evidence-based corrections as soon as misinformation surfaces.
- Amplifying accurate information through authoritative and relatable sources.

Tools for Combating Misinformation

Social Listening Platforms:

- Track trending topics and detect emerging misinformation in real time.
- Monitor platforms like X, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups for misinformation affecting communities..

Trusted Sources:

- Centralize and promote reliable information hubs for farmers and local communities.
- Disseminate verified information via official websites, SMS, and radio broadcasts..

Collaborating with Influencers:

- Leverage the reach of respected figures such as:
 - Veterinarians, agricultural officers, and community leaders.
 - Local influencers on social media to amplify accurate information.

Activity: Crisis Scenario

Goal of the Activity:

Work in groups to create a clear and actionable communication plan to counter the spread of misinformation in this scenario. Use the techniques and strategies discussed earlier, and explain why you choose specific approaches

Objectives: What is your main goal?

Target Audience: Who needs to hear your message?

Key Messages: What are the main points you need to communicate?

Communication Channels: Where and how will you deliver your messages?

Action Plan: What actions will you take, and when?

Evaluation: How will you measure success?

Thank you

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